An inserted hapten (or haptens if more than one copy is inserted) will ultimately be flanked by amino-terminal and carboxy-terminal flanking sequences which correspond in sequence to duck HBcAg protein, or sequences which have been derived from duck HBcAg protein. In addition, more than one copy of a hapten may be inserted at a single site, or at different sites on the same monomer, or different haptens may be inserted in tandem at a single site, or different haptens may be inserted at different sites on the same monomer. Any length and combination of haptens may be inserted so long as the monomer that is produced is able to assemble into particles which elicit an immune response.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly amend claims 1, 2, 14, 17, 21, and 24 as follows:

1. (amended) A composition comprising a plurality of recombinant nucleocapsid protein monomers, the primary sequences of which are derived from duck hepatitis B virus, wherein said plurality of monomers are assembled to form a particle.

2. (amended) The composition of claim 1 wherein at least a first portion of said nucleocapsid protein monomers includes a first hapten.

14. (amended) A method of delivering nucleic acids to a subject in need thereof, comprising administering to said subject a composition comprising a nucleic acid and a plurality of recombinant nucleocapsid protein monomers, wherein the primary sequences of said monomers are derived from duck hepatitis B virus, wherein said plurality of monomers are assembled to form a particle, and wherein said nucleic acid is contained within said particle.

17. (amended) A nucleocapsid protein monomer particle processing method, comprising the steps of:

providing a composition comprising a plurality of recombinant nucleocapsid protein monomers, the primary sequences of which are derived from duck hepatitis B virus, wherein said plurality of monomers are assembled to form a particle,

exposing said particle to a charged agent to produce a mixture of said monomers in a non-particle form, and